



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COUNCIL**

**26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021**

### **DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY**

#### **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.**

#### **1. PURPOSE FOR THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the WLGA Council 'Diversity in Democracy' report and the work of the Council's own Democratic Services Committee in respect of diversity, and the resulting actions that need to be taken forward by the Council in addressing each of their content.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To note the work of the Democratic Services Committee and the interim report of the Working Group produced to promote the diversity agenda within the Council, as attached as appendix A.
2. To note the actions outlined within the WLGA Council report, as attached at appendix B.
3. To endorse in principle a 'Diverse Council' declaration and agree for a bespoke RCTCBC diversity declaration to be brought forward to the July Council meeting.
4. To receive updates and progress reports on the work needed to be undertaken by the Council in respect of the actions outlined within the WLGA Council report and the ongoing work of the Democratic Services Committee as and when appropriate.

#### **3. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY**

- 3.1 The diversity agenda has been growing across all aspects of public life and it is important that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council are committed to increasing diversity, which includes tackling the barriers which prevent an individual's active participation in local democracy.
- 3.2 A more diverse democracy means decision-makers with broader life-experiences and a greater understanding of the challenges faced by wider society. A diverse and more inclusive democracy leads to better engagement with individuals and communities, in turn leading to greater levels of confidence and trust and in turn better decision making and better governance.

- 3.3 The Welsh Government have been focusing heavily on the diversity agenda and following the evaluation of phase one of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy work a number of key recommendations and actions were derived, with such actions being addressed through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Further work by the WLGA Council has also strengthened the impetus for diversity actions to be considered and implemented now, to allow any improvement in diversity within democracy for the Local Government Elections in 2022 and beyond.
- 3.4 In light of the work undertaken by the Welsh Government and the importance seen by not only the Democratic Services Committee but the Council as a whole of achieving diversity in democracy, the Democratic Services Committee established a working group to look in detail at the proposed actions that have come forward from the above mentioned evaluation. The Working Group are also considering the opportunities and engagement which would benefit the future of diversity in advance of the 2022 local government elections to encourage participation as a principal authority and with both Community and Town Councils across the County Borough.

#### **4 DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT.**

- 4.1 The Democratic Services Committee Working Group have been focused with their work and are clear that their work will be an ongoing process to ensure that a more diverse democratic environment is created within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Their work included aspects of awareness raising for the recent Senedd Elections and the longer-term work that is needed for the Local Government Elections in 2022. It is important to emphasise that the Working Group were aware that some aspects of the diversity agenda were outside its remit and that of the Council and such areas needed to be taken forward by political parties and other stakeholder groups. The Working Group do however plan to meet with Group Leaders as part of their work to promote the actions needed to be taken forward, due to the important role that they play. The Working Group will look to seek the participation of Group Leaders to champion the diversity expectations within the selection processes of their political parties and also assist by promoting the advice available to future candidate or individuals considering standing for office at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.2 Through its initial findings the Working Group developed a range of interim recommendations which would assist in promoting the diversity agenda. These recommendations were endorsed at the recent meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021. There is still further work for the Working Group to address, but it is felt timely that the work done to date is reported on and the recommendations actioned upon.

- 4.3 The interim report of the Democratic Services Committee Working Group is attached as Appendix A, which includes 16 recommendations to support the diversity agenda.

## **5 WLGA COUNCIL**

- 5.1 Like many Councils, the WLGA has committed to making a step change in local government diversity at the 2022 local elections. At a special meeting during April, the WLGA Council endorsed its 'Diversity in Democracy report' (attached at appendix B). The report was the culmination of the work of a cross-party working group and builds on the action plans and ambitions of both councils and partners.
- 5.2 It is advised that the WLGA will take forward several actions nationally, as outlined within the report such as:
- The launch of the [beacouncillor.wales](https://beacouncillor.wales) website already in place.
  - Representations will be made to political parties to take action and make progress
  - Representation to Welsh Government and the Independent Remuneration Panel that councillors should be entitled to 'resettlement grants' (effectively redundancy payments) should they lose their seat at an election.
- 5.3 At its meeting and through its report the WLGA Council recognised the diversity work already under way locally but called for concerted and ambitious local action. Through its report and resulting actions it asks Councils to prioritise action locally, promoting the take-up of members' allowances and progressing 'Diverse Council' declarations by the summer.
- 5.4 Members' allowances play a critical role in encouraging greater diversity; some councillors can be disproportionately affected if they are on low incomes or have caring responsibilities. Many councillors are dissuaded from claiming their full entitlements to allowances, such as reimbursements of costs of care or travel, due to peer or public pressure. The WLGA Council therefore unanimously agreed that there is a need to foster a culture where all councillors are encouraged and supported to claim any necessary allowances or expenses to which they are entitled.
- 5.5 The WLGA Council also unanimously agreed that all councils should commit to a declaration by July 2021 on becoming 'Diverse Councils' in 2022, to provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity. The report includes an 'outline' Declaration to:
- Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
  - Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
  - Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and

- Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
- 5.6 Councils may however wish to undertake further action or commitments within their Declarations according to local priorities.
- 5.7 The WLGA Council discussed the merits of positive action and there was support for the use of voluntary quotas in local elections; this is a matter for local groups and parties but where such voluntary approaches have been adopted in the past, there has been significant progress in terms of gender balance. The WLGA Council also unanimously agreed that councils should set targets to be representative of the communities they serve at the next elections.
- 5.8 Councils' local diversity work will be supported by a national awareness raising, publicity and support through the WLGA and Welsh Government. WLGA officials will be meeting with Heads of Democratic Services to share ideas and approaches to develop local Diverse Council Declarations.

## **6 ACTIONS GOING FORWARD.**

- 6.1 It is suggested that the Actions outlined within the WLGA Council report are added to the Action plan already developed by the Democratic Services Committee working group in respect of work already identified by the Council in respect of diversity.
- 6.2 Timely progress reports and updates will be provided to the Working Group to ensure the group are happy with the delivery of the actions.
- 6.3 Work will need to be taken forward with Group Leaders of the Council to strengthen the diversity outcomes that are anticipated and to ensure all ways possible of achieving a greater diverse RCT is achieved.
- 6.4 Work on a Diversity Declaration, bespoke to the Council will be taken forward and presented to the July Council meeting, to meet the required timescales set by the WLGA

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The work of the Democratic Services Committee Diversity working group and the WLGA looks to improve the equality and diversity across the County Borough and within the local democracy setting. The more representative of society and diverse our Councillors are the better understanding they will have of the needs of the local community and therefore are better equipped at carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

8.1 Democratic Services Committee – [10<sup>th</sup> May 2021](#).

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

9.1 The awareness raising opportunities referenced within the interim report can be delivered through platforms already available to the Council. In respect of 'resettlement grants' proposed by the WLGA financial implications may be incurred.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 outlines a number of duties placed on Local Authorities in respect of the diversity agenda.

## **11. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

11.1 The work of a Councillor is fundamental to the Council's Corporate plan, as Councillors are the mouthpiece for the communities that they serve.

11.2 Ensuring that there are greater opportunities for a more diverse democracy across RCT links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

12.1 Trying to achieve a diverse culture is challenging and the Democratic Services Committee working group have, in a short period of time, already identified potential barriers that may dissuade members of the public to stand as a candidate for election.

12.2 As a Council we need to ensure that any perceived barriers are eradicated and instead celebrate and promote the rewarding experiences of becoming a Councillor.

12.2 The recommendations of the working group and the actions identified by the WLGA will look to be implemented as soon as possible, due to the need to try to engage as many potential candidates in the Local Government 2022 elections.

12.3 The Diversity Declaration will need to be presented to Council by July 2021.

# **DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY**

**The Interim Update Report of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group.  
2021.**

## Chairs Foreword – County Borough Councillor M Adams



Diversity within Local Government is all about creating an inclusive environment, accepting of every individual's differences, enabling all Councillors to achieve their full potential and as a result, allowing Council services to reach their fullest potential for the benefit of its residents. If you value each person's differences, regardless of age, disability, ethnic background, gender identify, religion or belief, political persuasion, or sexual orientation then you are allowing each person to contribute their unique experiences, which can have an extremely positive impact on the work of a Council as a whole and the people that we serve. The more representative of society and diverse our Councillors are the better understanding they will have of the needs of the local community and therefore are better equipped at carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

However, trying to achieve this diverse culture is challenging and as a working group we have, in a short period of time, already identified potential barriers that may dissuade members of the public to stand as a candidate for election. We need to ensure that any perceived barriers are eradicated and instead celebrate and promote the rewarding experiences of becoming a Councillor. We need to demonstrate the flexibilities of the Council to allow for a work life balance, which will further be enhanced through the potential for conducting hybrid meetings. We need to promote the remuneration available to Elected Members and the training opportunities and support provided, such as a carers allowance, so that any future candidate is aware of the support open to them. We need to engage with our communities and groups to educate and promote the democratic process to make it engaging to residents, who may feel inspired to attend and one day become that Councillor.

We recognise that Town and Community Councils provide a vital connection for communities into decision making and we need to work with our Community and Town Council colleagues to engage with potential candidates and support their elected members. It was therefore important as a working group looking at this issue that we had a Community Council representative as a member of the working group.

The work of the group is fast moving and already actions have been outlined as a response to the provisions in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 that will take forward the diversity agenda and the recent recommendations of the WLGA Council report. Our work will be ongoing until the 2022 Local Government Elections as we work to ensure that the Council achieves all it can to push the diversity agenda and develop a more diverse democratic profile. However, there are many things outside of our control and work will

need to be taken forward in conjunction with political parties and other stakeholders to push the agenda forward.

This interim report allows us to compile the work achieved to date and the recommendations we feel are necessary to positively start the engagement and educating of the democratic process within Rhondda Cynon Taf. We need to act now to reach out to potential candidates. We also need to continue our momentum of engaging with the youth voters through the voting awareness raising campaigns that have been taken forward for the Senedd elections as our young people are the mouthpiece and potential Councillors of the future.

Can I thank all the Members of the working group for their valuable contributions, especially my Vice Chair, Councillor Heledd Fychan. I would also like to thank officers for their attendance, especially the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Manager, representatives from the Youth Engagement & Participation Service and the Head of Democratic Services and his team.

Cllr. M.Adams.

### **Diversity in Democracy.**

It is important for democratic institutions and public services to reflect the diversity of the population they represent and serve. A more diverse democracy means decision-makers with broader life-experiences and a greater understanding of the challenges faced by wider society. A diverse and more inclusive democracy leads to better engagement with individuals and communities, in turn leading to greater levels of confidence and trust and in turn better decision making and better governance. It is important that the people who make decisions on behalf of the people are in tune with and representative of their local communities, unfortunately this is not always the case.

The diversity agenda has been growing across all aspects of public life and it is important that we as a Council are committed to increasing diversity, which includes tackling the barriers which prevent an individual's active participation in local democracy.

The Welsh Government have been focusing heavily on the diversity agenda and following the evaluation of phase one of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy work a number of key recommendations and actions have been derived, with such actions being addressed through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Further work by the WLGA Council has also strengthened the impetus for diversity actions to be considered and implemented now to allow any improvement in diversity within democracy for the Local Government Elections in 2022 and beyond.

In light of this work undertaken by the Welsh Government and the importance seen by not only the Democratic Services Committee but the Council as a whole of achieving diversity in democracy, the Democratic Services Committee established a working group to look in detail at the proposed actions that have come forward from the above mentioned evaluation, the opportunities and engagement which would benefit the future of diversity in advance of the 2022 local government elections to encourage participation as a principal authority and with both Community and Town Councils across the County Borough.

### **Terms of Reference**

**The Terms of Reference agreed by the working group at its inaugural meeting are detailed below**

"The Working Group will:

- Review the actions outlined within the Welsh Government Phase 2 Action Plan in relation to Diversity in Democracy in order to consider proposals to support these objectives;
- Consider what the Council can do to raise awareness and promotion of the role of Councillors, to reduce potential barriers to becoming a Councillor (County Borough / Community / Town) with the aim of encouraging future candidates from diverse backgrounds to come forward for Election.

**Proposed Outcome from undertaking the review:**

- To increase diversity within democracy at the local Government Elections 2022 and any future election.
- To reduce the barriers to attracting a more diverse pool of candidates
- To promote and raise awareness of the role of a Councillor and the work undertaken
- To consider Officer proposals to engage and support potential candidates
- To consider and comment upon engagement with 16 – 17 year old's in local government democracy.
- To consider proposals for the future training / information provided to Councillors in respect of diversity
- To inform discussions with Group Leaders ahead of the 2022 Local Government Elections

**Membership of the Group**

The membership of the group consisted of:

County Borough Councillor M Adams ( Chair); County Borough Councillor H Fychan (Vice Chair), County Borough Councillor M Webber (Equalities Champion), County Borough Councillor J Bonetto, County Borough Councillor J Edwards, County Borough Councillor S Stephens, County Borough Councillor S Powderhill, County Borough Councillor L Walker.

Community Councillor J. Turner Llanharan Community Council.

### Is there Diversity in Democracy? – Current Position.

People assume ‘diversity’ relates to the sex of a person or their ethnicity and this is generally how diversity is gauged, however *Diversity is more than gender or ethnic diversity; it is about different voices, not just different characteristics of people.*

There is no County Borough Council in Wales in which both sexes are equally represented. More often, women make up between 20 and 30% and sometimes less. The average age of councillors in Wales is around 60 and has remained stubbornly within that range for many years. The number of non-white councillors is miniscule even in areas of Wales with relatively large numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic citizens.

The 2017 local elections saw small improvements in gender balance across Wales: 29% of all candidates were women (up by 1% from 2012); 28% of councillors elected were women (up 2% from 2012) and 32% of all newly elected members were women. The gender balance of cabinet members also remains low and lower than the proportion of women councillors at 27.5%. The age profile of councillors did not change significantly remaining proportionately older than the general adult population (47% of councillors were aged 60 years or older) and a higher proportion of councillors were retired (31%). Only 1.8% of councillors were black or ethnic minorities compared to 4.7% for the Welsh population. 16% of candidates and 11% of councillors stated that they had a disability, and there remain a range of challenges for disabled people participating in the democratic process. The report on the Local Government Candidates Survey 2017 provides further information about both candidates and elected councillors.

#### Diversity within Democracy RCT?

There is currently no quantified profile on the diversity of Members within the Council membership, which is something the working group are looking to address. However, when looking at the gender balance within the democratic structure there is the following:

- Of the Council’s current 73 Elected Members (2 vacant seats as at April 2021) **39** are **Male** and **34** are **Female**
- RCT Cabinet: 5 Men / 4 Women
- Chairs/Vice Chairs: 18 Women have been appointed as either a Chair/Vice-Chair  
15 Men have been appointed as either a Chair/Vice-Chair

When looking at the age profile of Members it is recognised that the majority of Member are above 60.

Age Group	No. Of Members
18 – 30:	4
31-40:	8
41 – 50:	12
51-60:	19
60+:	30

In light of the above information RCT Council favours well in comparison to many other Local Authorities with its gender balance ratio. However, there is still lots the Council must do to attract other diverse candidates in coming forward and engaging within the democratic process.

**What are the barriers to democracy?**

The role of a councillor is stimulating, rewarding and regarded as a privilege by many. The role however is a challenging and demanding one and is not one that should be considered lightly; it is a complex and demanding role, which requires a significant time commitment and can therefore have implications on people's family lives and work-life balance. It can impact on a professional career and on an individual's income and future financial security. It is also a role that can expose individuals (and their families) to regular personal criticism, insults and even threats, particularly through social media.

A number of studies have been compiled to look at the barriers to democracy with such studies highlighting:

- Child care and other caring responsibilities
- Time-commitment and meeting times
- Public criticism and online abuse
- Public's understanding of local government and the role and responsibilities of councillors and the Council itself is limited therefore portraying a political and organisational culture
- Remuneration and Employment
- Role models and incumbency

Members of the Group agreed with the above barriers and also considered the following as potential barriers within RCT:

- Disability access
- Technical / Digital Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Support and guidance for independent candidates

Members of the group spoke of their personal barriers to becoming a Councillor and it was considered important that such examples are highlighted to potential candidates to illustrate how those barriers can be broken down and the rewards that are brought by pursuing the role of a Councillor.

### **How can we improve? – *The Work and Findings of the Working Group.***

The Working Group have been focused with their work and are clear that their work will be an ongoing process to ensure that a more diverse democratic environment is created within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Their work has included aspects of awareness raising for the forthcoming Senedd Elections and the longer-term work that is needed for the Local Government Elections in 2022. It is important to emphasise that the Working Group were aware that some aspects of the diversity agenda were outside its remit and that of the Council and such areas needed to be taken forward by political parties and other stakeholder groups. The Working Group do however plan to meet with Group Leaders as part of their work to promote the actions needed to be taken forward, due to the important role that they play. The Working Group will look to seek the participation of Group Leaders to champion the diversity expectations within the selection processes of their political parties and also assist by promoting the advice available to future candidate or individuals considering standing for office at the earliest opportunity.

The Working Group were also conscious of the need to include Community and Town Councils within its work as it appreciates the role fellow colleagues play within the communities that they serve.

#### **Awareness Raising – the Right to Vote.**

Members felt it was crucial that as part of their work they look to promote the right to vote to the newly enfranchised 16 -17 year olds, who for the first time will be able to vote in the Senedd Elections and will be able to vote in the 2022 Local Government Elections Wales. Members also addressed the need to focus not only on the youth vote but also widen the campaign to engage with any disenfranchised voters. Awareness raising campaigns have also been undertaken by the Welsh Government and Electoral Commission and such materials have been promoted to youth groups within RCT via the YEPS service, as well as the service taking forward its own awareness raising campaign.

#### **Welsh Government HWB resources – [Vote 16](#) ; [PleidLais /Voice2Vote](#) ; [Raise yourvoice](#)**

The Welsh Government provided numerous resource materials to promote and help educate new young voters. The Voice2Vote resources pack developed by the Welsh Government included online resources aimed at young people aged 13 and over in Wales which brought to life why young people should vote. The vote16 resources provided online videos and access to events and activities that could be undertaken to again educate young people on the importance of voting and also how to vote. Dissemination of these materials were provided to YEPs and work by the Council was being undertaken in respect of dissemination to Schools. Due to the Covid Pandemic and the lockdown restrictions and closure of schools the dissemination within schools was not as productive as previously anticipated. However, going forward, with the easing of restrictions it is anticipated that future work with schools can be taken forward ahead of the Local Government Elections. The Working Group were keen for opportunities to still be made available for such engagement and awareness raising through the welsh baccalaureate and citizenship lessons.

## **Electoral Commission - [Welcome to your Vote](#)**

The Electoral Commission have created a new set of educational resources for newly enfranchised 16 and 17 year olds in Wales, who are preparing to cast their votes for the first time. The tools, designed for use in classrooms and with youth groups across Wales, were intended to help young people who are voting for the first time at the Senedd elections. The handbooks, videos and quizzes cover three key topics – what you can vote for, campaigning and how to vote, - and aim to demystify the voting process for young voters.

### **YEPs – #Isityourfirsttime Voting Campaign.**

The working group were pleased to welcome representatives from the YEPs service who advised of the positive engagement undertaken to date in respect of the awareness raising within young people in the County Borough on their rights to vote and the importance and impact of their vote. Their campaign 'isityourfirsttime' which was led by the young people has been pushed through a number of platforms via the service (facebook, twitter, snapchat, Instagram, ticktock), including use of the YEPs tv live (an online programme dedicated to the voting campaign). Members were advised that the youth Members were the mouthpiece to promoting the campaign to their peers and positive engagement had been received. In addition youth workers based within schools and colleges were also assisting with promoting the campaign message.

### **Youth Decide – RCT Council Campaign.**

The Council's Communications Team in discussion with the working group developed a number of social media infographics highlighting the importance of the youth vote which was disseminated through the Council's social media platforms. A social media video entitled 'Don't leave yourself on mute' was also taken forward. It is suggested that the work done to date on these campaign materials be reviewed following the Senedd Election to ensure they are fit for purpose for the 2022 Local Elections. It is anticipated that a collaborated approach could be taken forward with Schools and YEPs to assist in the development of the campaign materials to ensure young people can relate to the messages within.

(Details and examples of the social media posts can be found in appendix 1 of the report.)

### **Diversity Action Plan – Council Driven Actions.**

In September 2020, the Minister for Housing and Local Government provided an update on the 'Phase Two - Diversity in Democracy Programme Action Plan' developed by the Welsh Government. A number of the actions outlined by Welsh Government have been included within the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act and will therefore naturally be taken forward by the Council as part of the Acts legislative requirements i.e Public Participation Strategy / webcasting requirements / hybrid meetings. The Working Group however utilised this key document and identified what actions would be driven by Welsh Government and those that could be taken forward by the Council to improve democracy within the Council. The actions outlined by Members resulted in a detailed 'Council Driven Action Plan' which resulted in a number of recommendations that could be taken forward in the first instance. Such areas highlighted by Members included work on the Council website to include videos and details of the 'life of a councillor', work to be taken forward in the Council Chamber to ensure accessibility and promotion of translation facilities. Another suggestion by Members

was the promotion of the Role of a Councillor through the RCT jobs fair. Members were keen to promote such advantages and opportunities to promote the work of a Councillor and to prevent any potential barriers that may be perceived by a prospective candidate.

The Action Plan of the Working Group is attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

**Diversity & Inclusion Events** – The working Group have utilised the knowledge and experience of the Council’s Equalities and Inclusion Manager who has provided details of the diversity and inclusion work of the Council’s Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) team to support the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities under [equalities law](#). This provided much valuable information to the group and it was noted that Elected Members should be proactively involved in the programmes and events supported and promoted by the Council.

**Social Media and Standards & Ethics - Disrespectful Behaviour**– Members of the group spoke passionately about their role as a Councillor highlighting both the positives and negatives that can come with the role. Often Members are subject to disrespectful behaviour, especially through Social Media. It was highlighted that further training would be taken forward with Members in respect of social media, providing Members with what ‘was and wasn’t’ acceptable behaviour for Members to contend with. It was also noted that on occasions, in the heat of debate the Council Chamber could potentially see moments of disrespectful behaviour towards Members of different political persuasions. Members felt strongly that such behaviour was unnecessary and could often be seen as a barrier to promoting the role of a Councillor. It was discussed that the open-door policy of the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer needed to be further promoted so that Members felt assured that they could report any such behaviour. A mutual respect policy or a statement of understanding could be developed for all Members to sign up too outlining their duties as a Councillor including the need to have mutual respect within the Council Chamber was suggested as a way forward.

**Members Support** – Ensuring Member’s mental health is more important now than ever as Members balance the demands of work life balance and their role as a Councillor during the Covid Pandemic and as the Council and residents of RCT recover from it . New demands have been placed on Members as they learn new ways of working to ensure they can fulfil all of their roles as a Councillor and are still able to meet the needs of their constituents. Further promotion of the ‘Time to Talk’ campaign to Members and the opportunities and support that Members can access through the Council’s Occupational Health Service needs to be taken forward for Elected Members. Working Group Members also discussed how the promotion of such services should be promoted to future candidates, and as picked up during their work in the Action Plan, the opportunities for reasonable adjustments should also be highlighted.

**Members Training** – Members of the Working Group are aware of the amendments being made to the Induction Curriculum Framework for Candidates and New Members in Wales for the Local Elections 2022 which is being developed by Local Authorities working with the WLGA. This framework outlines the curriculum for the induction of members in Wales leading up to and following the local elections in 2022. It sets out the suggested local and national

activities to support potential and new members. It is not designed to be prescriptive as the needs of each Council and Councillor are different. It should however provide a guide for what should be considered when developing local programmes. The Framework is being designed to fit with the *Development Framework for Members*, a competency framework for members which provides more information about the subjects which should be covered in both induction and ongoing member development. It also fits with the *Wales Charter for Member Support and Development* and takes account of the legislative requirements for members including those set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Following the delivery of an induction programme, further development for councillors should be informed by an annual personal development reviews (PDRs). Members of the Working Group were keen for aspects of diversity to be included in the framework and the Induction programme for RCT that would further be developed for all Members following the 2022 Local Elections. Members are keen for 'Unconscious Bias' to be taken forward as a training module as well as training on the menopause and social media. In addition the group discussed Members receiving timely 'bitesize' information in respect of 'diversity within RCT' which could be presented through the Members portal to assist Members in their understanding and promotion of diversity within their wards and across the County Borough.

**Future Open days** – Members felt it would be beneficial to take forward open day events at the Council Chamber (when covid restrictions allows) to allow potential candidates to have a feel for the Council Chamber and to learn more about the role of a Councillor and work within a Council Chamber. With the new ways of working Members will be able to attend Council meetings remotely or through a hybrid setting, which allows Members further flexibility and balance of other commitments. The provision of webcasting and the live streaming of meetings will also help to promote public participation in the democratic process and hopefully engage with future candidates. Such webcasting recordings provide a powerful demonstration of democracy and part of the role of a councillor and raise awareness of the work of the Council.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Through its initial findings the Working Group have developed a range of interim recommendations which will assist in promoting the diversity agenda, which they put forward to the Democratic Services for consideration. There is still further work for the Working Group to address, but it is felt timely that the work done to date is reported on and the suggested recommendations are considered to allow for them to be actioned if agreed. To assist in the Committees deliberations the recommendations also seek to illustrate the potential outcome such a recommendation would have so that its impact could be easily demonstrated and measured if successful.

### Recommendation 1.

- To work collaboratively with the YEPS Service, Schools and Colleges in the run up to the 2022 Local Government Election to further promote and educate the importance of the youth vote and the democratic process. Utilising the opportunities for engagement and awareness raising and the educating of a 'role of a Councillor' through Key Stage 3, the welsh baccaulaureate and citizenship lessons within schools.

**Outcome:** Young people are better educated in the democratic processes, how democracy relates to the provision of Services and the role of a Councillor. Young people have an understanding on the importance of voting.

**Outcome Measure:** Survey of young people following such engagement / Registration drive/campaign to increase numbers of 16 and 17 year olds on the register.

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### Recommendation 2

- To review the effectiveness of the voting awareness raising campaigns following the Senedd Elections and to build upon these campaigns ahead of the Local Government Elections 2022, ensuring wider partnerships arrangements are taken forward to allow engagement with wider audiences.

**Outcome:** To establish the percentage of first-time youth voters who took part in the Senedd Elections and to build upon this number for future elections.

**Outcome Measure:** Number of first-time youth voters on the Electoral Register

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### Recommendation 3

- To review the Council Websites 'Democracy pages' to promote the role of a Councillor with details and videos of local Members, promote how the work of a Councillor links in with everyday services taken forward by the Council and provide details and links of the different tiers of government to assist in increasing the understanding of democracy within RCT and Wales. To ensure that the page demonstrates the features

available to Members – such as translation facilities, audio equipment within the Chamber, Hybrid meeting opportunities and promoting reasonable adjustments to prevent any perceived barriers for any future candidate

**Outcome:** Promoting and educating in respect of the role of a Councillor and the democratic process. Promoting the opportunities available to reduce any anticipated barriers

**Outcome Measure:** Website page viewing figures

#### **Recommendation 4**

- To take forward the positive relations and opportunities to work with Town and Community Council's to ensure links with 'Democracy pages' are promoted on own website / social media platforms and for similar local 'role of a councillor' to be developed and promoted.

**Outcome:** Promoting and educating in respect of the role of a Councillor and the democratic process. Promoting the opportunities available to reduce any anticipated barriers

**Outcome Measure:** Website page viewing figures

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#### **Recommendation 5**

- To promote the remunerations and allowances that are available to Members on the Council's website and to candidates standing for Election by linking with the Council's Democracy page

**Outcome:** Promoting the opportunities available to reduce any anticipated barriers

**Outcome Measure:** Website page viewing figures

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#### **Recommendation 6**

- To promote the Council's democracy pages and the role of a Councillor to established groups, such as School Governors who are often already active within their local communities and could potentially look to become candidates at a future election.

**Outcome:** Promoting the opportunities available to reduce any anticipated barriers

**Outcome Measure:** Website page viewing figures, survey of candidates.

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#### **Recommendation 7**

- To liaise with the Council's Employment, Education & Training team to establish the opportunity for a 'Democracy stall' at a future Council Career Fair to further promote the role of a Councillor and how democracy works within RCT and Wales.

**Outcome:** Promoting the role of a Councillor and the opportunities available to reduce any anticipated barriers

**Outcome Measure:** Number of people who engage at the event

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### **Recommendation 8**

- Members welcome the introduction of a Public Participation Strategy and welcome the opportunity to drive forward further public engagement in democracy by seeking the public's view on items for consideration at scrutiny meetings, ensuring work programmes are dealing with issues that matter to residents of the County Borough. As part of the duty of the Act and to engage the public in local democracy the Council will need to provide a constitution guide to be developed and promoted on the Council website which the working group also welcomes.

**Outcome:** Improved public engagement to better inform the democratic process

**Outcome Measure:** webcasting viewing figures / more public engagement within the democratic process

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### **Recommendation 9**

- To continue to address the works needed at the Council Chamber to ensure that the Chamber is Fully accessible.

**Outcome:** Fully accessible to reduce any barriers for any disabled Member

**Outcome Measure –** Disabled Participants (members of the public) / Elected Members are able to engage at meetings in the Chamber

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### **Recommendation 10**

- Following the easing of lock down restrictions and when safe to do so take forward the opportunity for the promotion of 'open invites' to the Chamber for potential candidates so they can learn more about the role of a Councillor and work within a Council Chamber.

**Outcome –** Engagement opportunities and Promotion of the role of a Councillor and the work of the Council

**Outcome Measure -** Attendance at the event

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**Recommendation 11**

- That the Member induction programme provides all Members with the skills and knowledge base to undertake their role. Ensure that a rolling programme of training is developed for each Member throughout their term of office and to provide the opportunity for mentoring for Newly Elected Members when requested.

**Outcome** – Members feel confident in performing their duties and have a wide knowledge base

**Outcome Measure** – Members annual survey / Members PDR process

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**Recommendation 12**

- To undertake a diversity survey with Members which will provide a benchmark for future elections and allow the Council Business unit to review the support / barriers that may have been experienced by a Member during their term of office. The undertaking of such a review will help to deliver a positive and diverse environment for future Members to undertake their roles.

**Outcomes** -Provide a benchmark of the diversity of Members within RCT

**Outcome Measure** – Survey responses

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**Recommendation 13**

- To ensure Members are advised of the support available to them through the Council Business unit and the Head of Democratic Services – providing contact details at the earliest opportunity during the Member Induction. Ensuring Members are aware of the 'Open Door' policy of the Head of Democratic Services.

**Outcome** – Members feel supported during their role

**Outcome Measure** – Members Annual Survey

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**Recommendation 14**

- To consider introducing a 'statement of understanding' for Members outlining their duties as a Councillor including the need to have mutual respect within the Council Chamber.

**Outcome** – A demonstration of mutual respect to other people with varying political opinions, show of working together for the benefit of its communities.

**Outcome Measure** – Number of formal or informal complaints received in respect of Members behaviour

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**Recommendation 15**

- That the Members Portal is utilised to provide Members with bitesize' information in respect of 'diversity within RCT' to assist Members in their understanding and promotion of diversity within their wards and across the County Borough.

**Outcome** – Supporting Members to deliver for the needs of the communities

**Outcome Measure** – Members annual survey

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**Recommendation 16**

- To seeking the participation of Group Leaders to champion the diversity expectations within the selection processes of their political parties and to encourage Group Leaders to promote the advice available to future candidates or individuals considering standing for office at the earliest opportunity.

**Outcome** – Opportunities for a more diverse range of candidates selected

**Outcome Measure** - Survey of candidates standing for election.

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**Voting Awareness Raising Campaign.**

**RCT Youth Vote Campaign.**

Video Campaign 'Don't leave yourself on mute' - <https://youtu.be/sHVJuNbwM5U> (english)

<https://youtu.be/sHVJuNbwM5U> (cymraeg)

**Social Media Posts**





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**YEPs Service - Voting Awareness Campaign.**

Facebook and Instagram platforms: Search [#yepsisthisyourfirsttime](#)

Other videos shared



4 reasons to vote - english.MOV



4 reasons to vote - welsh.MOV



history of the senedd - english.MOV



History of the senedd - welsh.MOV



How to vote - english.MOV



How to vote - welsh.MOV



Intro to voting - English.MP4



Intro to voting - Cymraeg.MP4



Register to vote -  
english.MOV



Register to vote -  
welsh.MOV

### Action Plan - Council Focused

The plan has been drafted to illustrate the Welsh government overall objectives and then a combination of Welsh Government derived actions for Local Authorities to drive forward and actions that have been proposed following Members comments.

<b>Objective 1: Increase understanding of different tiers of government in Wales, the role each plays in society and how they operate.</b>	
Potential Actions for the Council	Proposed Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of Welsh Government educational resources to accompany the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in Wales</li> <li>• Guidance and workshop setting with 16 and 17 year olds regarding Democracy in Wales</li> <li>• Social Media campaign to engage with youth voters</li> <li>• Review the 'Council Business' page on the Council website providing information on how the Council works and the different tiers of government.</li> </ul>	<p>Resources have been developed by WG and have been disseminated through YEPs. Work is now being undertaken with dissemination to Schools.</p> <p>There is the opportunity to establish whether the materials could have a web-based platform within these youth areas, such as using the Wicked website other social media platforms?</p> <p>Opportunity to link to the Council web page of <a href="#">'becoming a Councillor'</a> promoting the educational resources that are available.</p> <p>Workshops have already been taken forward through YEPS through a variety of different platforms promoting the extension of the voting franchise. Such engagement is to be taken forward with schools although this has been delayed due to the Covid pandemic. The Head of Democratic Services and Consultation and Engagement Officer have recently met with the Director of Education &amp; Inclusion to discuss the best way forward with potential democracy events being taken forward via zoom / team platform with schools by consultation team.</p> <p>There is a need to take forward a social media campaign to engage with youth voters, raising awareness of the importance of voting and how democracy can affect their lives. Work is currently being undertaken by the Council Communications team, with the campaign being piloted with youth groups to test its effectiveness. The campaign will be brought before Members at the next meeting of the group. A need to focus on the wider opportunities with the campaigns and not focus solely on young people. Working and linking</p>

	<p>with wider partnerships going forward with such engagement and awareness raising could achieve this wider audience.</p> <p>The Council website holds details of '<a href="#">Council Business</a>', Councillor details and election results however there is opportunity to review this area and provide details and links of the different tiers of government to assist in increasing the understanding of democracy.</p> <p>To take forward a review and evaluation following the forthcoming Senedd elections to establish if the awareness raising campaigns had been successful and areas for further improvements.</p>
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<p><b>Objective 2: Increase engagement with the public to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>raise awareness of the role and activities of the Council provide clarity about how the public can better inform local decision making;</b></li> <li>• <b>build greater community cohesion through a greater presence at community events, creating and building upon community networks.</b></li> </ul>	
Potential Actions	Proposed Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the role of a Councillor and the work of the Council</li> <li>• Publication of Council's constitution and constitution guide to increase public engagement</li> <li>• Produce a Public Participation Strategy</li> <li>• Conducting Hybrid Council meetings and webcasting at the Council Chamber to promote local decision making.</li> </ul>	<p>The WLGA are currently revising the content of the 'become a Councillor' website to include videos and pen portraits of Members across different Welsh authorities. This revised content should be completed by March 2021. There is opportunity to promote the '<a href="#">Become a Councillor website</a>' by linking with the Council webpage. In addition there is an opportunity to take forward a local 'RCT Councillors' video message with Members highlighting the positives of a role of a Councillor identifying potential barriers that might have been identified to standing for election and the opportunities to overcome such barriers. There is a need to promote how the work of a Councillor links in with everyday services taken forward by the Council and again there is the opportunity for this to be demonstrated through the 'Council' webpages, with this in turn being illustrated during the youth engagement sessions to strengthen the connection of how people's votes can impact on the work of the Council. Following the Covid regulations, meetings of the Council are undertaken virtually and recordings of which</p>

	<p>are published on the Council website. Such recordings provide a powerful demonstration of democracy and part of the role of a councillor and raise awareness of the work of the Council.</p> <p>Opportunity to work with Town and Community Council's to ensure links with 'Becoming a Councillor page' are promoted on own website / social media platforms and for similar local 'role of a councillor to be developed' and promoted.</p> <p>To push to a wider audience and engagement, Members could be encouraged to utilise own media platforms to promote the role of a Councillor - through Member blogs / 'day in the life of'.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to take forward promotion of the role of a Councillor and democracy at future Career Fairs taken forward by the Council.</p> <p>In addition to this, potential virtual workshops within school settings could be taken forward to raise awareness of the role of a Councillor 'what do you do?' so young people have an understanding from a young age.</p> <p>There is a need and duty to build upon the public participation strategy already in place within the Council in respect of Public participation at meetings. The current strategies should be reviewed and updated in accordance with future hybrid meeting protocols.</p> <p>A number of Council Committees require lay members within its membership and the Council will need to take forward the further duty placed upon it to widen the future 'Audit &amp; Governance' Committee lay membership, with the Chairmanship of this Committee taken forward by a lay member. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee utilise the knowledge and experience of parent Governors on its Committee, as statutory required. Many of the Council's Members are or have been Parent Governors. Linking in with Governor support on the role of Councillors and the co-</p>
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	<p>opted / lay person membership could be considered to engage with potential future candidates. Scrutiny working groups have also previously benefitted from engaging with stakeholders during reviews to strengthen their work and resulting recommendations. There is the opportunity to drive forward further public engagement in democracy by seeking the public's view on items for consideration at scrutiny meetings, ensuring work programmes are dealing with issues that matter to residents of the County Borough.</p> <p>There will be a need to take forward webcasting of Council meetings as specified within the Act and the opportunity of hybrid meetings. Ensuring that the Council Chamber is DDA compliant is currently being taken forward. There is a duty to ensure the availability of translation facilities for Members to conduct Committee meetings bilingually. The Council have recently purchased new equipment to provide an improved audio feed and purchase of additional screens to assist with the running of meetings. Such improvements will potentially remove any barriers that might have prevented a future Candidate from standing at election.</p> <p>The Council Constitution provides guidance on how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are to be followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. As part of the duty of the Act and to engage the public in local democracy the Council will need to provide a constitution guide to be developed and promoted on the Council website.</p>
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<b>Objective 3: Increase awareness of the role of councillors, the contribution they make to society and how to become a councillor</b>	
Potential Actions	Proposed Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting the role of a Councillor and the work of the Council</li> </ul>	<p>Affording new Members with the opportunity to take forward a Mentoring scheme to assist new Councillors undertake their roles.</p>

	<p>Following the easing of lock down restrictions and when safe to do so take forward the opportunity for the promotion of 'open invites' to the Chamber for potential candidates to they become familiar with part of their future role.</p> <p>Promotion of the role of a Councillor could be circulated to established groups, such as School Governors who are often already active within their local communities.</p> <p>Taking forward potential (virtual) workshops within school settings that could be taken forward to raise awareness of the role of a Councillor 'what do you do?' so young people have an understanding from a young age.</p>
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**Objective 4: Increase confidence of councillors that they are valued, expectations placed on them are fair and that their remuneration levels appropriately reflect the work undertaken**

Potential Actions	Proposed Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure appropriate training and support is in place to support Councillors in their role to give confidence in what they do.</li> <li>• To provide the opportunity for mentoring of newly elected members</li> <li>• Ensure Members are provided with suitable electronic devices and training on such devices to support them in their role.</li> <li>• Advise of the remuneration available</li> <li>• Promotion of the 'role of a Councillor'</li> <li>• To survey Members during and at the end of their term of office</li> <li>• To promote the 'open door policy' for all Members to seek support from the Head of Democratic Services and the Council Business Unit.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the Member induction programme is fit for purpose and provides all Members with the skills and knowledge base to undertake their role. Ensure that a rolling programme of training is developed for each Member throughout their term of office. The Head of Democratic Services works closely with the Head of Organisational development to ensure Members are supported through training opportunities and as such there is no limit on the training budget available to Members.</p> <p>To provide the opportunity for mentoring for Newly Elected Members. Head of Democratic Services to liaise with WLGA regarding the mentoring programme.</p> <p>As previously agreed, to work with Members and ICT to establish the most suitable device for Members rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. To provide reasonable adjustments as advised upon. To ensure Members are provided with suitable training on such devices to assist them going forward.</p>

	<p>To promote the reasonable adjustments that the Council can offer Elected Members to assist them in undertaking their role confidently.</p> <p>To promote the remunerations that are available to Members on the Council website and to candidates standing for Election by linking with the Council Business page.</p> <p>To review the support / barriers that may have been experienced by a Member during their term of office. Such a review will help the Council going forward to resolve any issues to assist Members in their role.</p> <p>To ensure Members are advised of the support available to them through the Council Business unit and the Head of Democratic Services – providing contact details at the earliest opportunity during the Member Induction.</p>
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**Objective 5: Greater respect and support for those standing for and securing elected office in Wales.**

Potential Actions	Proposed Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a duty on political group leaders to promote high standards of conduct</li> <li>• Social Media training to be provided to Members and offer of such training to future candidates</li> </ul>	<p>opportunity for the working group to take forward discussions with Group Leaders to promote the code of conduct within their parties.</p> <p>Social Media training to be delivered to Members through the Member Induction programme and built upon during a Members term of office.</p> <p>Further training to Members on aspects such as unconscious bias and menopause training and the need to ensure the training opportunities delivered to Council staff are also provided to Members. Ensuring this training is also delivered to town and community Councillors.</p> <p>Undertaking a Members survey to gauge Members feedback on actions that needed to be addressed and training opportunities available was identified as a positive step forward to trying to deliver a positive and diverse environment for Members to undertake their roles</p>

## **WLGA SPECIAL COUNCIL**

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### **WLGA WORKING GROUP ON DIVERSITY IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

#### **Purpose**

1. To report on the work undertaken by the WLGA Cross Party Working Group on Diversity in Local Democracy and seek Council's endorsement of proposals to achieve a 'step change' at the 2022 local elections.

#### **Summary**

2. WLGA Council agreed in September 2018 to take steps to advance gender equality and diversity in Councils before the 2022 elections. This was in recognition of the lack of diversity in Welsh Councils . A cross party working group was set up to explore broader underrepresentation in democracy.
3. It is now widely acknowledged that equal representation is not only an issue of representational fairness but essential for the quality of policy development and decision making. Decisions will be better when they are taken by people with lived experience of an issue. The 'right person for the job' of councillor needs to be a member of the community they serve, in order to fully and consistently understand the lives and needs of that community. Councils also need to demonstrate to underrepresented communities that they are valued and included in local democracy.
4. Much work has been undertaken in the last decade in Wales to measure and improve the diversity of councils. More work is in the pipeline in preparation for the 2022 elections. There is a national communications campaign to encourage people from underrepresented groups to vote, engage with local democracy and stand for office. New mentoring programmes are being delivered with the Womens' Equality Network Wales and the Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales. Stonewall Cymru and Disability Wales will also soon be offering mentoring programmes. The Welsh Government and Senedd Commission are working with Councils, schools and youth councils and developing resources to encourage 16 and 17 yr olds to get involved and vote. The WLGA has a new Be a Councillor website and, is part of the Pan UK civility in public life campaign and are working with Councils to continue to improve the range of support and development provided to members.
5. In previous elections councils have worked hard to encourage underrepresented groups to stand with their own outreach, mentoring schemes and information days. They have done much to improve the support provided for serving councillors and provide them with guidance, development and better working

conditions. More recently we have worked together as a local government family to support members suffering abuse and harassment.

6. The Working Group found, and national and international research shows, that this comprehensive activity will not be enough to make change at the pace required. This report outlines the additional activities that could make a difference.
7. There are three main areas for action:
  - Encouraging councils to ensure all councillors receive their full entitlement to allowances and salaries, and encouraging the introduction of resettlement grants, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it
  - An agreement by councils to undertake new or developed work in this area and visibly commit to this by signing up to becoming Diverse Councils.
  - To discuss positions and making representation to political parties and acting locally to set quotas and/or voluntary targets for the election of councillors from underrepresented groups.

## **Background**

8. WLGA Council first received this report at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Given the significance of the report and the issues considered and due to the congested agenda at the November Council, members agreed to defer the report to a later and dedicated meeting in early 2021.
9. At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018, WLGA Council committed to advance gender equality and diversity in local democracy ahead of the 2022 local elections.
10. WLGA Council agreed to establish a cross party working group to develop an action plan and to identify possible actions for consideration by WLGA Council. The Membership of the Group is at Annex A. Not all members were able to attend all meetings, however, contributed to the work via discussions with officers. The WLGA Equalities Cabinet Members Network has also fed into the work of the group.
11. The working group did not commission additional research or evidence gathering as there have been several reviews in recent years. The working group considered recommendations which have emerged from research undertaken in 2018-19 by the Women's Equalities Network, Chwarae Teg, the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, the Welsh Government

including the review of its Diversity in Democracy programme, the Fawcett Society, the Electoral Reform Society, and the British Council. Further research and reports, including engagement and research through the Welsh Government's developing Race Equality Action Plan and Race Alliance Wales' 'Do the Right Thing' report (January 2021)<sup>1</sup>, have informed this report.

12. The evidence base, barriers and challenges to attracting more diverse councillors were referenced in the WLGA's submission to the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into diversity in local government in September 2018<sup>2</sup>. The barriers and challenges can broadly be summarised as:

- Time-commitment and meeting times;
- Political and organisational culture;
- Childcare and other caring responsibilities;
- Public criticism and online abuse;
- Remuneration and impact on employment; and
- Lack of diverse role models and incumbency

13. The working group also considered the legislation proposed in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and considered the views from various groups through the Diversity in Democracy roundtables of stakeholders, convened by the Minister for Housing and Local Government, where the WLGA was previously represented by Cllr Debbie Wilcox and, subsequently, by Cllr Mary Sherwood.

14. The WLGA supported and participated in regional diversity in democracy stakeholder events held by the Welsh Government in the autumn of 2019 which sought views from under-represented groups from across Wales.

15. Senior WLGA and local government members also participated in an Electoral Reform Society 'Equal Power Equal Voice' Roundtable debate in October 2020 which sought to explore some of the barriers around diversity, including quotas.

## **Progress remains slow**

16. Data shows that there remains a significant lack of diversity in Welsh councils. In Wales' local authorities:

- 28% of councillors and 29% of Cabinet members are women.

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<sup>1</sup>Race Alliance Wales 'Do The Right Thing' research report on racialised representation in public and political life (January 2021) - Full research paper (<https://bit.ly/3qpU4Rm>) Executive summary (<https://bit.ly/3bPtfCk>)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&fileid=1852&mid=665>

- Councillors are proportionately older than the general adult population (47% of councillors were aged 60 years or older) and a higher proportion of councillors were retired (31%).
  - Only about 1.8% of councillors are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) compared to 4.7% for the Welsh population and few hold senior positions.
  - 11% of councillors stated that they had a disability, and there remain a range of challenges for disabled people participating in the democratic process.
17. There has been some small progress, however, the leadership of Welsh local government is more diverse than ever before, though we recognise it is not fully reflective of wider society; there are 6 women leaders (up from 2 in 2017) and 6 women Deputy Leaders, a quarter of leaders are below the age of 45 and 2 leaders and several senior councillors have featured in Pride Cymru's 'Pinc List' in recent years.
18. The Black Lives Matter movement and wider Welsh Government commissioned working groups on the impact of COVID-19 on BAME people has demonstrated the barriers and challenges faced by of a significant proportion of society and highlighted the need to make visible progress in policy, leadership and, in particular, political representation.
19. The Report of the Welsh Government's BAME Covid-19 Socioeconomic Subgroup, chaired by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna observed:
- "The overall theme that ran through the factors discussed in this report is the impact of longstanding racism and disadvantage and lack of BAME representation within decision making to effect better socio-economic outcomes. Although many of the issues highlighted have been identified and discussed previously, they have not been addressed in any systematic and sustained way. The coronavirus pandemic is, in some respects, revealing the consequences of such inaction on race equality."
20. The Socioeconomic Subgroup recommended that:
- "Welsh Government to encourage the political engagement of BAME communities by raising awareness and understanding of Welsh and UK democratic institutions and processes, with the overall aim of encouraging the increase of political representation of BAME communities by also encouraging voter registration from BAME communities."
21. The Welsh Government is also developing a Race Equality Action Plan, which will be published for consultation in the Spring 2021. This Plan will outline a vision, goals and actions to make Wales an anti-racist nation and will prioritise anti-racism and greater diversity in leadership and representation.
22. In advance of the Race Equality Action Plan, the actions and proposals in this report have been informed by WLGA engagement and participation in the Welsh Government's stakeholder and working groups and other race equality workstreams. Race Alliance Wales' 'Do the Right Thing' report outlines a range of

cultural and institutional barriers around participation of racialised people (it uses this term as it is argued that BAME people are racialised because of their ethnicity) and outlines several recommended actions and commitments for public bodies.

23. Local authorities are also undertaking local reviews or actions in response to the issues raised through Black Lives Matter and COVID-19 work reflecting the issues. The WLGA leadership has committed to building on local authorities' work and the WLGA will respond to the Race Equality Action Plan when it is published for consultation.
24. The lack of diverse representation in local authorities is a problem that has been recognised for decades. A more diverse democracy and elected representatives who are more reflective and understanding of their communities leads to better engagement with individuals and communities, in turn leading to greater levels of confidence and trust and better decision-making informed by a wider range of perspectives and lived experiences.
25. Prominent decision-makers from under-represented groups can be influential role models, empowering and encouraging others to aspire to follow in their footsteps and to contribute to public life. Similarly, more diverse senior political leaders who are more representative of an organisation's workforce can lead to improved workforce engagement, trust in leadership and a more confident organisational culture.

## **Diversity in Democracy 2017**

26. Local authorities, the WLGA, Welsh Government and political parties have employed a range of measures to encourage greater diversity in candidates and councillors. The WLGA supported the Welsh Government-led Diversity in Democracy programme ahead of the 2017 elections.
27. The Diversity in Democracy programme was the biggest and most well-resourced programme of its type and was supported by a range of national partners including the main political parties. The programme included an awareness and promotional campaign, production of literature and online videos for candidates, businesses and mentees, working with employers to encourage them to encourage and support staff to be councillors and the roll-out of a mentoring scheme for people from under-represented groups.
28. A range of online materials were produced to provide information to candidates and councillors, including the WLGA's Be a Councillor guide and Councillor's Guide and the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy materials which included specific leaflets to encourage businesses to support staff in becoming councillors.

29. The Welsh Government produced a series of online videos with councillors as part of the Diversity in Democracy programme and several councils, including Gwynedd, Monmouthshire and Powys also produced excellent videos to explain the role of councillors and to encourage candidates to stand.
30. Several councils ran 'open days' ahead of the elections and mentoring and shadowing programmes are widely regarded as being beneficial, particularly in supporting people from under-represented groups to come forward to stand.
31. A mentoring campaign was the central project within the Diversity in Democracy programme and participants received extensive support, advice, training and access to serving councillors who acted as mentors. Of the 51 mentees who participated, only 16 stood for election and only 4 were elected. However, such a 'conversion rate' suggests that, in future, mentoring and support programmes may be a more effective use of resources if they are provided to people who had already committed to standing as a candidate.

## **Diversity in Democracy 2022**

32. The cross party WLGA working group met three times to consider evidence and develop recommendations for consideration by WLGA Council. The working group has reviewed the existing evidence, considered what activities councils and the WLGA could do to improve diversity in democracy and the role of the Welsh Government and political parties.
33. The Minister for Housing and Local Government also convened a Diversity in Democracy roundtable of stakeholders which met twice. During the autumn of 2019, the Welsh Government organised 4 regional stakeholder events with 95 people attending, including councillors and officers from town and community councils and unitary authorities and third sector including charities, support organisations for the disabled, BAME, young people and religious organisations. WLGA Officials facilitated roundtable discussions. Key messages were:
- There was a general lack of awareness of the role and contribution made by councillors.
  - Social media abuse directed at councillors is getting worse. The abuse is predominately, but not exclusively aimed at women which has a direct effect on diversity in the role. There was increasing concern the abuse could be directed at members of the councillors' family, which was evidenced by some of the experiences of attendees.
  - Training and development are fundamental, but people were not always aware of what is available.
  - Time commitment was a barrier for many people, particularly people with family commitments or jobs.

- Providing help with costs to support individuals stand for election was a recurring theme, particularly for disabled people and other individuals from protected characteristics groups. Childcare costs were also seen as a barrier to campaigning.
- There was confusion about whether and what councillors are paid and on what basis. There were concerns about the determinations made and how individuals were impacted as a result of the interplay between the HMRC, the benefits system and the remuneration levels. Many attendees at the workshops felt remuneration of the councillor role does not cover the costs associated with the role particularly in town and community councils.

## Action Plan 2020-22

34. A range of actions emerged from the Ministerial roundtable and the WLGA's working group which are being implemented or planned. These include the following (specific WLGA or local authority activity is included in italics):

### Awareness/Value of Role

35. Councils and councillors have played a critical, central and prominent role during the COVID 19 pandemic during 2020. Councils have demonstrated that they are uniquely placed at the heart of their communities and public service delivery and councils and councillors have invariably been the first port of call for the most vulnerable or those in need of support or assurance. The crisis has demonstrated councils' ability to respond irrespective of scale and reaffirmed the importance of subsidiarity and localism, with elected members rooted in their local communities.

36. A broad-based communication campaign is in development with the Welsh Government and Senedd Commission. This will start with messages about the value of democracy and voting aimed at primarily at the newly enfranchised for the 2021 Senedd elections. This will develop to focus on the value and contribution made by councillors and encouraging participation in local democracy.

37. In parallel to the development of the national campaign Welsh Government will work with partners to identify key points/events throughout 2020 to promote positive stories about councillors' contributions and achievements.

*38. Councils and WLGA to develop a consistent and coordinated campaign demonstrating how much councillors are valued, developed and supported.*

*39. WLGA has launched a Be a Councillor website <https://www.beacouncillor.wales/> which will be further developed in 2021 with pen portraits and 'day in the life' case study videos of councillors from a cross-section of characteristics. It will also include an e learning module for people interested in standing to enable them to*

*understand the role in more detail and "hit the ground running" should they be elected.*

40. *Coordinated activity between authorities, including information and awareness campaigns and open days, linked to key events such as Local Democracy Week, International Women's Day, Black History Month, Disability Awareness Day, LGBT History Month etc.*
41. *Targeted WLGA promotional work through Welsh political party conferences in 2021*
42. *Targeted engagement work with third sector organisations to encourage discussion and interest in volunteers translating their informal community role into an elected community role. The COVID 19 Pandemic has increased the levels of voluntary and community-based work. The WLGA will engage with individuals and groups who may now wish to continue this work by standing for office.*

### **Candidate/Councillor Abuse**

43. *The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will facilitate a change in the requirement to use personal addresses on ballot papers. The Act will also place a duty on political group leaders to promote high standards of conduct. It will also require councils to publish official rather than personal addresses for councillors.*
44. *The WLGA, in partnership with their colleagues in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, are involved in developing the Civility in Public Life campaign to promote mutual respect and promote high standards of conduct. The WLGA, working with the LGA, has produced an online Councillors guide for handling intimidation <https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation> .*
45. *The WLGA is working with authorities to encourage an informal but comprehensive duty of care for members.*
46. *The WLGA is also contacting and providing advice and support to individual councillors who receive online abuse and, where appropriate, issuing supportive messages challenging online abuse via social media.*

### **Training and Development**

47. *The WLGA, with authorities, will continue to review current and future training provision. This will include a focus on new ways of delivering support and development post COVID 19.*
48. *Work will be undertaken to identify ways in which ex councillors can use their experience and skills to enhance their CVs or continue to use their skills and experience through involvement with training / support mechanisms.*

49. *The National "curriculum" for member induction is being updated. This overview of what members would find useful to learn is agreed with councils and includes subjects considered mandatory. As well as traditional subjects like Ethics and Standards, The Well-being of Future Generations and Scrutiny skills, this will now include unconscious bias, personal safety and remote working skills.*
50. *A new online Councillors Guide will be developed for Councillors for the 2022 elections.*
51. *The suite of National e Learning modules specifically developed for members which is freely available via the NHS learning@wales website will be updated for the 2022 elections. This work is being undertaken by authorities working together with the WLGA and is particularly important as a result of the changes to working and learning practice as a result of the Pandemic.*
52. *The national Competency framework for elected members is now being developed prior to the 2022 elections to include new requirements such as the understanding of unconscious bias, civility, remote meeting attendance and ICT skills.*
53. *Councils undertake personal development review with members to personalise training support. WLGA offers guidance and training in how to conduct PDRs*
54. *The Leadership programme for elected members developed and delivered with LGA and Academi Wales is being re commissioned and refreshed. There are challenges associated with delivering the programme in the current climate which will be addressed as part of the commission.*

## **Mentoring**

55. *Welsh Government officials are working with disability and equality organisations such as the Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales, Disability Wales and Stonewall Cymru to scope the requirement for a Wales wide mentoring scheme which includes all protected characteristics. Several mentoring schemes are already organised by a range of third sector organisations, these will be aligned and coordinated, with resources and learning shared.*
56. *Work will be undertaken to explore work shadowing/apprenticeships and other opportunities to expose individuals to the work of councils which taken together will form a pathway to participation.*
57. *The WLGA has promoted and is supporting mentoring schemes run by EYST and the Women's Equality Network Wales. Several councillors have participated as mentors in these programmes.*
58. *Newly elected members are offered mentors when they join the council (WLGA provides guidance and training for member mentors).*

*59. There are opportunities for individual councils/councillors to provide shadowing and mentoring opportunities for people interested in standing for office ahead of the 2022 local elections.*

## **Flexibility**

60. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 includes a range of provisions to support flexible ways of working including making provision for job sharing and strengthening the remote attendance arrangements.

61. Welsh Government Officials are now working with WLGA and LA officials to consider how the legislation and arrangements made for meetings to be held remotely could be extended to improve flexibility and access for a wider range of councillors.

*62. Local authorities' rapid adoption of virtual meetings via platforms such as Teams, Webex or Zoom during COVID 19 has transformed the way councils do business. Meetings are more accessible for many members, significantly reducing travel commitments and time, allowing members to attend meetings from work and, in the main, from home. Whilst there are potential impacts on 'work-life' balance and setting boundaries between council work and home-life, this approach has provided greater flexibility for members with caring responsibilities. Virtual meetings have also encouraged a less formal and flexible approach to meetings. Councils have bid for WG funding to facilitate digital engagement through the Digital Democracy Fund.*

*63. The LGA have produced a tool to enable women, parents and carers to become councillors and has a range of ideas that could be adopted in councils including a way of assessing the councils support for diverse councillors. <https://www.local.gov.uk/twenty-first-century-councils>*

## **Supporting individuals with protected characteristics**

64. The Welsh Government plans to introduce an Access to Elected Office fund to assist disabled people to stand for elected office in Wales at the 2021 Senedd and 2022 local elections.

65. The Welsh Government recently consulted on this proposal and the WLGA and several authorities were supportive. The Working Group also suggested that learning from this initiative could be used to inform any future access funds such as for childcare for candidates.

## **Education**

66. Welsh Government and Senedd Commission has developed a set of educational resources to accompany the extension of the franchise to 16- and 17-year olds in Wales which will focus on knowledge of and

participation in democracy in Wales. This is freely available to schools and other education settings via an online resource Hwb

67. Work is being undertaken to identify ways in which schools in Wales can use the new curriculum to highlight and promote participation and engagement with local democracy.

*68. Councils will continue to engage with schools, including links with school councils and Youth Councils.*

*69. Councils are also using the Electoral Reform Support Grant to engage with newly enfranchised groups to help them understand the democratic process and encourage them to register and vote.*

## **Remuneration**

70. In response to concerns raised by WLGA Leaders, the Independent Remuneration Panel is identifying the key issues in relation to taxation and benefits applying to members and will prepare a paper for Welsh Government.

71. The Minister for Housing and Local Government has raised the tax issues with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to explore potential solutions.

72. The Welsh Government has committed to explore with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales the case for payments in respect of councillors who lose their seats at election and present options to Ministers. This is an issue that has been raised as a concern by leaders, as councillors (and in particular full-time senior councillors), are at significant personal, financial risk if they lose their seat.

## **Making a Step Change in 2022**

73. The above proposed work programme outlines a range of awareness raising, engagement and support activities. Many similar activities were delivered during the Diversity in Democracy programme ahead of the 2017 elections.

74. However, despite some progress, improvement was marginal at the at the 2017 elections:

- the number of candidates increased by 5.6% (3,463 candidates compared to 3,279 in 2012 (including Anglesey candidates in 2013).
- 29% of all candidates were women (up by 1% from 2012).
- 28% of councillors elected were women (up 2% from 2012).
- 32% of all newly elected members were women).

75. Uncontested seats at the 2017 elections remained high at 92 (7%) seats uncontested. This was fewer than in 2012, when there were 99 (8%) seats uncontested, but this continues to undermine local democracy.
76. Compared to the 2017 programme, Diversity in Democracy 2022 will include refinements and more targeted activity based on evaluations and lessons learned, along with some new, additional work such as the Civility in Public Life campaign.
- 77. The WLGA working group has shaped and is supportive of the proposed programme of activities outlined above, however it concluded that the programme on its own is unlikely to see significant improvements, particularly without clear leadership, commitment and coordinated actions from the main political parties.**
- 78. The working group has considered several more significant proposals which might have a more positive impact on diversity and the number of candidates in 2022.**
- 79. The views of Council are therefore sought on the following additional actions.**

### **The Role of Political Parties**

80. The working group recognised that independent councillors were a key feature of Welsh local government. It also recognised that political parties provided the majority of candidates at local elections and therefore play a key role and have significant responsibility in encouraging a more diverse range of candidates.
81. The working group noted that political parties have different policies and views about the introduction of quotas, all women shortlists, selection of diverse candidates in winnable seats or other positive-action initiatives.
82. There are, however, a range of good practice initiatives that political parties could undertake to encourage and support more diverse candidates both locally and nationally:
- Review party selection criteria e.g. reducing the length of membership before members can stand for office.
  - Local parties can establish fora and run events/socials/training sessions for underrepresented groups. Helping these groups understand what the role of councillor is about, that their participation is required and how to stand plus the support that will be available once in office.

- Parties could establish 'Diversity Grants' to support people from underrepresented groups (who will not benefit from the Access to elected office fund) to stand.
- Existing councillors from underrepresented groups can be put forward for public events on panels, as speakers or as chairs to raise the profile of members from underrepresented groups and enable them to be role models for their communities.
- Talent spotting and engaging with communities working with community leaders from underrepresented groups, encouraging people shadow, be mentored and stand for election.
- Promoting and signposting of information and materials, such as those available via parties or national bodies such as the WLGA.
- Establish respect protocols for behaviour within the Group reflecting that required in councils and for the Code of Conduct with sanctions for people not meeting standards or undertaking training in respect.
- Encourage political parties and local groups, including officials those with a responsibility in the selection process to undertake unconscious bias training.
- Encourage political parties to provide by-stander training for candidates and party members, to understand how to provide support to diverse candidates and challenge any abuse, such as disability hate crime or racism, that may be experienced on the doorstep (this was a proposal that emerged from the Electoral Reform Society roundtable in October 2020),

**83. It is recommended that WLGA Council agrees to encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities such as those listed at paragraph 80 above to improve diversity in local government democracy.**

### **Resettlement grants or 'parachute payments'**

84. Councillors are one of the only paid public roles that do not have financial protection and are not entitled to receive a 'redundancy' payment if they lose office at an election. Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament receive a significant resettlement grant should they lose office at an election. Redundancy payments are also a protected right for public sector employees.

85. In particular, senior councillors tend to be full-time, often have to give up careers to focus on their councillor role and many have family as well as

other financial commitments; the personal risk of a sudden and significant loss of a salary is inconsistent and unfair compared to other public roles. It is also a disincentive for more diverse people with careers or family responsibilities to consider taking on the most senior roles in local government.

86. The Independent Remuneration Panel has committed to consider this matter and explore whether the Welsh Government would need to introduce any legislative amendment to empower the Panel to introduce any such payments in future.
87. The 'cost of politics' and councillors' remuneration is a controversial matter and is subject to significant media and public scrutiny and political pressure. Any proposals would therefore have to carefully balance equality, fairness and costs and public acceptability.
88. WLGA leaders have previously raised the matter with the Independent Remuneration Panel previously, however the WLGA does not have a formal position on resettlement grants for senior salary holders.
- 89. It is recommended that WLGA Council adopts a formal position calling for the introduction of resettlement grants for senior salary holders.**

### **Councillors' allowances and expenses**

90. The Independent Remuneration Panel and some WLGA Leaders have previously expressed concern that many members entitled to receive specific expenses, such as travel allowances, or reimbursements of costs of care do not make claims. Several councillors also decide to forgo parts of their salaries; the Independent Remuneration Panel recently wrote to the WLGA noting "...that it is an individual's right to decide that they can take a lesser amount than that prescribed as long as there is no pressure applied either directly or subliminally", noting concern, however, that 12% of councillors decided to forgo last year's salary increases. There are concerns that this is partly to do with austerity, public and media perception but anecdotally, it is clear that there is also local peer or political group pressure or organisational cultural norms.
91. These allowances are provided to meet councillors' legitimate costs incurred in undertaking their duties and also play a role in encouraging greater diversity; some councillors can be disproportionately affected if they are on low income or have caring responsibilities. The Independent Remuneration Panel and several leaders have expressed concerns about this practice as it

may disadvantage members who cannot afford to forgo expenses and acts as a disincentive to stand/re-stand.

92. As noted above, the 'cost of politics' and councillors' remuneration is subject to significant media and public scrutiny.

**93. It is recommended that the WLGA Council agrees to encourage all councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses incurred.**

### **Diverse Councils**

94. The Welsh Government has committed to making Wales a Gender Equal Wales and the Cabinet to becoming a Feminist Government, which is a government that is:

- Committed to equality of outcome for all women, men and nonbinary people and actively works to drive cultural and structural change
- Pro-actively works to advance equality and remove the barriers against all women's participation in the economy, public and social life
- Puts a gender perspective at the heart of decision-making, resource and budget allocation
- Takes an intersectional approach to all of its work and ensures diversity of representation, participation and voice
- Is people-focused and collaborative, ensuring that all communities are meaningfully engaged in its work
- Is open, transparent and accountable and welcomes scrutiny through a gender lens
- Makes use of policy development and analysis tools to embed gender equality into all of its work and actively monitors progress towards equality using a robust evidence base
- Leads by example and supports other public bodies to take action to deliver equality.

95. The Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted global concerns about racism and COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the health and socio-economic impacts of inequality. Increased representation from BAME people on councils is essential to ensure that BAME people are represented and contribute their lived experiences to the decision-making process.

96. Councils' Strategic Equality Plans outline objectives which demonstrate their commitments and planned actions to promote equality and diversity, including as employers and representative bodies. Many councils will also undertake a range of activities in promoting diversity in democracy ahead of the 2022 local elections, as outlined above.
97. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will introduce a new 'public participation' duty on local authorities which will include encouraging people to participate in decision-making and promoting awareness of how to become a member of the council. Further details of the aspects of the Act 2021 which contribute to diversity can be found in Annex C
98. Council meeting times are regularly highlighted as an issue for many serving councillors and, occasionally, as a disincentive for some people to stand. Councils review their meeting times at least once per term and several allow committees to have more flexibility to suit the committee members.
99. Councillors however have diverse backgrounds and varying personal, caring and professional commitments; it is therefore unlikely that council meeting times are ever going to be convenient for all members. For example, a councillor who has a young child might find it easier to meet during the day, whereas another may prefer to meet in the evening, depending on work commitments, schooling arrangements or childcare availability.
100. An option suggested at the Equality Cabinet Members Network, was that meetings of any one committee should be varied over the year between day and evening so that members were not always having to take the same time off work or arrange childcare. It was also noted that people should be advised before standing that meeting times may vary and could be changed, depending on the views of the newly elected councillors.
101. The potential permanent changes to meeting arrangements so that they can be held remotely may reduce the time required for travelling to meetings, however members with caring responsibilities may still require staggered meeting times as it is still not possible to provide care and attend a meeting simultaneously.
102. The Senedd and Parliament traditionally have recess periods, including a long Summer Recess. Approaches to the scheduling of meetings and official council business vary across authorities. Some councils have an official Summer recess, some do not schedule or scale down council meetings during school holidays. Councillors with children in school may be disadvantaged if council meetings are scheduled in the holidays, which may also prove to be a disincentive to stand.
103. The working group have suggested that Councils might, in addition to their Strategic Equality Plans commit to becoming Diverse Councils, publishing a 'Diversity Declaration' or a Council Motion outlining their

intentions to secure equal outcomes for all by working actively to drive cultural and structural change and pro-actively working to advance equality and remove the barriers to any individual's participation in the economy, public and social life. This commitment would focus on ensuring that under-represented groups are more active participants in engagement and decision making. Demonstrating a public commitment to improving diversity and an open and welcoming culture to all in advance of the 2022 elections.

104. A commitment by each local authority to becoming a Diverse Council could include
- Establishing 'Diversity Ambassadors' for each political group in the council who, working with each other and their local party associations could encourage recruitment of members from underrepresented groups.
  - Encouraging and supporting Heads of Democratic Services, Elections officers/ Communications teams and /or Democratic Services Committees to undertake democratic outreach to promote the role of local councillor in, for example, schools or with underrepresented communities.
105. **A draft example of what could be included in a Diverse Council Declaration is included at Annex D. It is proposed a draft Declaration, to be adapted and adopted locally, is developed in consultation with local authorities and partner organisations.**
106. **It is recommended that Council**
107. **Agrees to encourage a declaration by July 2021 from councils in Wales, on becoming 'Diverse Councils'; to commit to:**
- **provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;**
  - **demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;**
  - **consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and**
  - **set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.**

## **Diversity Targets**

108. Political parties were encouraged, through the Diversity in Democracy programme, to commit to gender targets at the 2017 elections and Welsh Labour, for example, committed to fielding women in 40% of winnable seats.

109. Other initiatives, such as 50-50 by 2020 have previously adopted targets and the Welsh Government's recently published 'Diversity and inclusion strategy for public appointments'<sup>3</sup> includes an action for:
- 'Welsh Government to consult and if desired set overall targets across all Boards in Wales for BAME, disabled, LGBT+ and young people and socioeconomic groups, recognising that individual Boards have varying specific requirements.'
110. Targets could be included in any 'Diversity Declaration' (if such an approach is agreed).
111. There are however mixed views on the value of targets. Targets provide a focus, demonstrate an organisation's ambition and commitment and provide a useful 'hook' for promotional and public relations purposes. However, targets need to be realistic and, as we are starting from a low base in terms of diversity of candidates and councillors, such targets may not appear ambitious enough.
112. Furthermore, whilst councils and the WLGA may seek to set targets to demonstrate ambition and commitment and can deliver a range of activities and reforms to encourage more candidates, other organisations notably political parties have the biggest influence over whether those targets can be achieved. Should councils determine local targets, they could therefore be criticized for not meeting targets which are largely not in their control.
113. At a recent meeting of WLGA Group Leaders it was suggested that whilst targets at Ward level are difficult, due to recruitment challenges, global targets for a whole authority area might be achievable.
114. **It is recommended WLGA Council provides views on the adoption of local or national diversity targets.**

### Quotas or Reserved Seats

115. The Local Government Commission in 2017 concluded that "Incumbency in local councils disproportionately benefits men...[and]...the slow pace of change is significantly driven by incumbency." According to the Elections Centre, in Wales' local elections in 2017, 895 incumbents stood for election (across 71% of seats) with 693 or 77% being successfully re-elected. In summary, incumbents are more likely to be re-elected than other candidates due to their profile, reputation, or track-record and, as

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<sup>3</sup> [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-for-public-appointments-action-plan-year1-2020-21\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-for-public-appointments-action-plan-year1-2020-21_0.pdf)

most councillors are older, white men, most successful incumbents are therefore older white men. The impact of incumbency has therefore led some campaigners to call for term-limits, quotas, or all-women shortlists.

116. The Welsh Government has previously controversially sought to tackle the issue of incumbency with the Golden Goodbye Scheme in 2002 and the 2015 White Paper proposal to introduce term limits for councillors, a proposal which was roundly rejected by local government.
117. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, there are four types of quota in use across the world today. Legal or voluntary candidate quotas and legal or voluntary reserved seats, reserved seats can be used for example to regulate the number of women elected. These can be introduced as a temporary measure and can be used at local and national level.
118. The WLGA has never proposed the adoption of quotas as a formal WLGA policy, although gender quotas were supported by the WLGA's former Leader, Baroness Wilcox of Newport, and the WLGA has previously outlined two 'Reserved Seats' models for discussion:
- a. localised and targeted All Women Reserved Seats for all by-elections during a municipal term. If such vacancies were targeted through a voluntary agreement between the main political parties to field only all women candidate lists, gender balance could improve by up to 5% during a municipal term.
  - b. A wider approach, which might require some changes to electoral law regarding the nomination process, could see a similar approach adopted for 'vacant' seats, where councillors had decided to stand down or retire at the election. If such councillors were able to commit to or notify of their intention to stand-down by an early-enough deadline, political parties could agree to voluntarily field all-women candidate lists in such 'vacancies', which could see as much as a 10-15% swing in terms of gender balance at an election. With such an immediate electoral impact, gender balance could potentially be achieved in local government over a 5-year period over the course of 2 elections.
119. Proposals such as quotas are controversial and there remain uncertainties regarding the legal basis for statutory quotas and political appetite for voluntary quotas. The Welsh Government plans to consider whether gender quotas should be introduced in Wales. The Ministerial Round-table has been informed that there may be legal limitations around the Senedd's competence which may prevent statutory quotas being introduced, even if the Welsh Government adopted quotas as a policy. Race Alliance Wales' 'Do the Right Thing' concludes that '...it is illegal to reserve all places for any particular characteristic, with exception made for women, and that quotas can legally only be made in regard to women, not other protected characteristic.'

120. More formal voluntary or statutory quotas have traditionally been recommended as a method of rapidly addressing imbalances in diversity and the effects of incumbency in perpetuating a lack of diversity. The Electoral Reform Society, Fawcett Society and British Council, call for legislation to be introduced for quotas (about 40-45%) for women candidates at elections. Others, such as the Women's Equality Network Wales, Chwarae Teg and the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government also call for this but do not stipulate that it should be established in legislation.
121. Extensive research undertaken by the above organisations and the Senedd committee, all point to some of the causes of underrepresentation being about how candidates are selected and elected and call for direct action to level the playing field so that women initially can be better represented.
122. The issues they describe are selectorate bias and processes, electorate bias and party group culture. The playing field is not level for some, due to conscious or unconscious bias, fostered by the image of incumbents and the culture of political groups and parties. The image of the *best person for the job* is often, whether consciously or not assumed to be a white middle class, middle aged man because this traditionally has been what a typical councillor looks like. The routes to and process of selection traditionally support this position.
123. Research undertaken by the Women's Equality Network Wales (Annex B indicates that –
- "Among the twenty Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) countries registering the sharpest growth in the proportion of women in parliament during the last decade...half had introduced legal quotas. By contrast, among the twenty OSCE countries lagging behind in growth...none had implemented legal quotas.
  - 100 Countries world-wide now have some form of gender quotas in place and 40 also use them for intersectional groups such as BAME women."
124. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance has outlined several 'pros and cons' of quotas:

**Cons:**

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference over men.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications and that more qualified candidates are pushed aside.

- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.
- Quotas violate the principles of liberal democracy.

**Pros:**

- Quotas for women do not discriminate but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
  - Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
  - Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
  - Women's experiences are needed in political life.
  - Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
  - Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
  - It is in fact the political parties that control the nominations, not primarily the voters who decide who gets elected; therefore, quotas are not violations of voters' rights.
  - Introducing quotas may cause conflicts but may be only temporary.
  - Quotas can contribute to a process of democratisation by making the nomination process more transparent and formalised.
125. The main arguments for introducing quotas are not just about ensuring equality and to better reflect wider society, but because more diverse life experiences lead to better, more rounded decision-making; it would not just amplify the voice of women but also impact on the nature of debate and the decisions taken. Several organisations argue that quotas are the only way to see a step-change in diversity based on the evidence of impact where they have been introduced, but also the slow progress in changing local government diversity and diversity in UK politics generally. Quotas however remain a contested concept and have not been universally supported when previously considered in a Welsh context. There were mixed views among the working group members and several leaders expressed reservations about the introduction of quotas during the Electoral Reform Society 'Equal Power Equal Voice' Roundtable debate in October 2020.
126. The Equality Cabinet Members network also considered the risk around the language of 'quotas', particularly in terms of public perception as diverse candidates could be perceived as being tokenistic, undermining the credibility of high-caliber candidates.
127. **It is recommended that Council provides views on the introduction of statutory or voluntary quotas for Welsh local elections.**

## Diversity of the WLGA

128. Representation on the WLGA Council is one area where local authorities could make a positive difference and signal their commitment to change. It is not possible to state with certainty the percentage of underrepresented groups on the Council as this should be identified by each person themselves and this exercise has not been done, however, although there are more women leaders than ever before, the Council does not have proportionate representation of women or BAME councillors.

129. Some local authorities have delegations of only two or three members to the Council and it will therefore be challenging for them to significantly change their membership, however, members may consider that there is an opportunity for authorities to proactively nominate more diverse members to the WLGA Council. The WLGA Council could also seek to appoint more diverse members as role models in Spokesperson or Deputy Spokesperson roles or involve wider councillors as Champions in the work of the WLGA.

### 130. Recommendations

#### **It is recommended that WLGA Council:**

**127.1 recognises the work of the WLGA's Cross-Party Working Group on Diversity in Democracy;**

**127.2 agrees to encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities such as those listed at paragraph 80 above to improve diversity in local government democracy;**

**127.3 Adopts a formal position calling for the introduction of resettlement grants for senior salary holders;**

**127.4 agrees to encourage all councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses incurred;**

**127.5 agrees to encourage a declaration by July 2021 from councils in Wales, on becoming 'Diverse Councils'; to:**

**127.5.1 provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;**

**127.5.2 demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;**

**127.5.3 Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and**

**127.5.4 set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.**

**127.6 provides views on the adoption of local or national diversity targets; and**

**127.7 provides views on the introduction of statutory or voluntary quotas for Welsh local elections.**

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**Report cleared by:**

**Cllr Mary Sherwood**, Joint WLGA Spokesperson for Equalities, Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty & Co-Chair of Working Group

**Cllr Susan Elsmore**, Joint WLGA Spokesperson for Equalities, Welfare Reform and Anti-poverty & Co-Chair of Working Group

**Author:** Daniel Hurford  
Head of Policy

Sarah Titcombe  
Policy and Improvement Officer

**E-mail:** [daniel.hurford@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.hurford@wlga.gov.uk)

[sarah.titcombe@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.titcombe@wlga.gov.uk)

## **ANNEX A**

### **WLGA working group on Diversity in Local Democracy**

#### **Members who have fed into the working group:**

- Co-Chair - Cllr Mary Sherwood (Labour), WLGA spokesperson for Equalities, Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty, City and County of Swansea
- Co-Chair - Cllr Susan Elsmore (Labour), WLGA Spokesperson for Equalities, Welfare Reform and Anti-poverty, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Well-being, Cardiff Council
- Cllr Cheryl Green (Liberal Democrat), Chair Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee, Bridgend CBC
- Cllr Daniel De'Ath (Labour) Lord Mayor, Cardiff Council
- Cllr Lisa Mytton (Independent) Deputy Leader, Merthyr Tydfil CBC
- Cllr Sara Jones (Conservative), Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development, Monmouthshire County Council
- Cllr Cefin Campbell (Plaid Cymru), Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs, Carmarthenshire County Council
- Cllr Nicola Roberts (Plaid Cymru) Chair Licensing and Planning Committee, Isle of Anglesey Council
- Cllr Dhanisha Patel (Labour) Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations, Bridgend County Borough Council
- Cllr Ann McCaffrey (Independent), Conwy County Borough Council
- Cllr Jayne Cowan (Conservative) Cardiff Council
- Cllr Bablin Molik (Liberal Democrat) Cardiff Council
- Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Labour), Newport Council who chaired the working group initially in her capacity as WLGA Leader

Views have also been provided through discussions with members and officers in:

- Equalities Cabinet Members' Network
- Chairs of Democratic Services Network
- Heads of Democratic Services Network

#### **Officer Support**

- Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy (Improvement and Governance) WLGA
- Sarah Titcombe, Policy and Improvement officer (Democratic Services) WLGA
- Dilwyn Jones Communication Officer, WLGA
- Huw Evans, Head of Democratic Services, City and County of Swansea

## ANNEX B

### EXTRACT FROM A WOMENS EQUALITY NETWORK (WEN) WALES BRIEFING PAPER

#### The case for quotas to deliver equal and diverse representation

February 2020

#### Evidence supporting quotas

- Research shows that quotas are the **“single most effective tool for ‘fast tracking’ women’s representation in elected bodies for government.”**<sup>4</sup>
- Among the twenty Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) countries registering the sharpest growth in the proportion of women in parliament during the last decade...**half had introduced legal quotas. By contrast, among the twenty OSCE countries lagging behind in growth...none had implemented legal quotas.**<sup>5</sup>
- There is international backing for gender quotas. Various international institutions, including the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination (**CEDAW**), the Beijing Platform for Action, the EU and the Council of Europe support their use.
- **Ireland** has successfully used quotas requiring that at least 30 per cent of the candidates each party stands nationally are female (rising to 40 per cent after seven years). **The percentage of women candidates increased 90 per cent at the 2016 election** compared to the 2011 election, with a corresponding **40 per cent increase in the number of women elected—** 35 in 2016 compared with 25 in 2011.<sup>6</sup>
- **100 Countries** world-wide now have some form of gender quotas in place and 40 also use them for intersectional groups such as BAME women.
- A report published by the United Nations in 2012 found that **out of the 59 countries that held elections in 2011, 17 of them had quotas.** In those countries, women **gained 27% of parliamentary seats compared to 16% in those without.**<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Drude Dahlerup et al., Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [IDEA], IPU and Stockholm University, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Norris, P. and Krook, M. for OSCE, Gender equality in elected office: a six-step action plan, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Brennan, M. and Buckley, F. ‘The Irish legislative gender quota: the first election’, Administration, vol 65(2), May 2017

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/aug/20/quotas-women-parliament-authors-edinburgh-book-festival>

## Types of Quota

Different types of gender quota have been used in different countries, depending on the electoral system and local circumstances. The Expert Panel on Electoral reform<sup>8</sup> describes the three main types as:

- **Candidate quotas which introduce a 'floor'** for the proportion of male or female candidates a party stands for election. These could be applied in the form of constituency twinning for First Past The Post (FPTP) seats. They could also be applied to multimember systems such as STV or Flexible List at a constituency or a national level. Parties in Scandinavia, Spain and Austria have voluntarily adopted similar quotas, ranging from 33 per cent to 50 per cent.
- Requirements for **the ordering of candidates on any list** element of the system. Voluntary quotas of this nature have been used by parties in Wales in Assembly elections, for example zipping of regional candidate lists. (I.e. listing candidates alternately according to their gender)
- **'Reserved seats'** to which only female candidates could be elected. This type of quota is widely used in South Asia, the Arab region and sub Saharan Africa.

### Examples of Incentives used:

- **Croatia** has legally binding quotas and uses incentives - for each MP representing an underrepresented gender, political parties receive an **additional 10 per cent of the amount envisaged** per individual MP;
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**: where 10 per cent of the funding provided to political parties is distributed to parties in proportion to the number of seats held by MPs of the gender which is less represented in the legislature,
- **Two for the price of one deposits** for two candidates of different genders could be used in Wales —this would appear to us to be proportionate in the context of seeking to ensure that the gender balance in the Assembly reflects the gender balance in the communities it serves.<sup>9</sup>

[www.wenwales.org.uk](http://www.wenwales.org.uk) / @wenwales

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<sup>8</sup> A Parliament that works for Wales, Report of the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, November 2017

<sup>9</sup> A Parliament that works for Wales, Report of the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, November 2017

## **ANNEX C**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021**

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 includes provisions which will contribute to diversity in local government democracy. These are:

- Entitlement to Job sharing for executive members and committee chairs
- A duty on principal councils to produce a Public Participation Strategy and for it to be reviewed regularly. This will include encouraging people to participate in decision making and promoting awareness of how to become a member of the council.
- A duty on political group leaders to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group.
- Electronic broadcasting of full Council meetings initially, and other meetings to be announced later, following ongoing consultation by WG with Councils.
- The provision of multi-location attendance at council meetings including physical, hybrid and remote attendance.
- Provisions enabling the maximum period of absence for each type of family absence for members of local authorities to be specified within regulations and for adoptive leave to reflect that which is available to employees.

## **ANNEX D (DRAFT) DIVERSE COUNCIL DECLARATION**

The following provides a draft declaration. It is proposed that this is further developed in consultation with authorities, representative organisations and will be informed by emerging priorities from councils' own diversity and equality action plans and emerging priorities from the Welsh Government's Race Equality Action Plan.

This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. We agree to

- Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy
- Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct
- Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections. Including:
  - Appoint Diversity Ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from underrepresented groups.
  - Encourage and enable people from underrepresented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing and official candidates.
  - Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing under-represented groups
  - Ensure that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.
  - Set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the 2022 local elections
- Work towards the standards for member support and Development set out in the *Wales Charter for Member Support and Development*.
- Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:
  - providing access to counselling services for all councillors
  - having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors.
  - taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including through social networks.
- Provide flexibility in council business by
  - regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times
  - encouraging and supporting remote attendance at meetings and
  - agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments.
- Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all

members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.

- Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.